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Charge against Amy Cooper dropped after completing racial bias education program

By [Eric Levenson](#), CNN

🕒 Updated 12:21 PM ET, Tue February 16, 2021

(CNN) — The Manhattan District Attorney's Office on Tuesday dropped the misdemeanor criminal charge against Amy Cooper, the White [woman who called police on a Black man in Central Park last May](#), after she completed education and therapy classes on racial equity.

"Given the issues at hand and Ms. Cooper's lack of criminal background, we offered her, consistent with our position on many misdemeanor cases involving a first arrest, an alternative, restorative justice resolution; designed not just to punish but to educate and promote community healing," Assistant DA Joan Illuzzi said in court, according to a statement.

The Critical Therapy Center provided classes to Cooper that "focused on the ways in which Ms. Cooper could appreciate that racial identities shape our lives but we cannot use them to harm ourselves or others," Illuzzi said.

"Having completed 5 sessions, Ms. Cooper's therapist reported that it was a moving experience and that Ms. Cooper learned a lot in their sessions together," she added.

Amy Cooper had been charged with falsely reporting an incident in the third degree. Illuzzi moved to dismiss the charge, and the judge granted the motion, the statement said.



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The charge stemmed from a May 25 confrontation in a wooded area of Central Park between Amy Cooper and Christian Cooper (no relation). Amid a disagreement over her unleashed dog, Amy Cooper called 911 and said in an increasingly frantic tone that a Black man was threatening her, according to video of the incident he filmed.

"I'm taking a picture and calling the cops," she says in video of the incident. "I'm going to tell them there's an African American man threatening my life."

A 911 dispatcher called her back and she repeated the accusation, adding that the man "tried to assault her," according to Manhattan District Attorney Cy Vance Jr.'s office.

"When responding officers arrived, Ms. Cooper admitted that the male had not 'tried to assault' or come into contact with her," a release from the DA's office said.

Christian Cooper declined to cooperate with prosecution

The viral video of the incident, the same day Minneapolis Police killed George Floyd, [made clear the dangers that Black men face](#) in America and highlighted the particular challenges that [Black birdwatchers and naturalists face](#).

In comments to CNN in May, she said she wanted to "publicly apologize to everyone."

"I'm not a racist. I did not mean to harm that man in any way," she said.

Still, Illuzzi's statement acknowledged that her allegation could have led to violence against Christian Cooper if police had reached him first.



Related Article: Black birdwatcher Christian Cooper says prosecuting Amy Cooper 'lets white people off the hook'

[in Congress.](#)

"The police would have been in a position where they thought that Mr. Cooper had tried to assault the defendant. Certainly, he would have been held and held forcibly if he resisted," she said.

Christian Cooper has [expressed ambivalence about the criminal case](#) and declined to participate in it, but Illuzzi said the incident was about more than two individuals.

"Mr. Cooper did not wish to participate in the criminal justice process but we determined that the defendant's offense wasn't solely against one individual but was a threat to the community if allowed to go unchecked," she said. "The simple principle is that one cannot use the police to threaten another and in this case, in a racially offensive and charged manner."

In a statement, Christian Cooper turned his focus to a larger political issue: [Washington DC's statehood and representation](#)

"I am far more outraged by the U.S. Congress, which continues to deny the mostly Black and Brown people of the District of Columbia statehood and the representation every American deserves, than by anything Amy Cooper did," he told CNN. "That gross racial injustice could be fixed by Congress now, today, and that's what people should be focused on -- not last year's events in Central Park."

Amy Cooper's attorney, Robert Barnes, [issued a statement on Twitter](#) thanking the DA's office for a "thorough and honest inquiry."

"We thank them for their integrity & concur w/ the outcome. Others rushed to the wrong conclusion based on inadequate investigation & they may yet face legal consequences," he wrote.

Vance had indicated in an earlier statement that the DA's office would try to reach a legal resolution with her.

"Our Office will pursue a resolution of this case which holds Ms. Cooper accountable while healing our community, restoring justice, and deterring others from perpetuating this racist practice."

CNN's Kristina Sgueglia and Alec Snyder contributed to this report.

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